



## **Meydenbauer Bay**

PARK AND LAND USE PLAN

### **Questions & Answers from the August 16, 2007 Steering Committee Meeting**

At the August 16, 2007 meeting of the Meydenbauer Bay Steering Committee, many questions were asked by members of the audience. These are important questions and likely to be of interest to people who did not attend the meeting as well as those who did. Therefore, this information will be posted on the project webpage.

Many of the questions cannot yet be answered fully, since answers will emerge as a result of the planning process and continued input from the Bellevue community. But the following information will provide answers to the extent that they are known at this time. *Note: Some of the questions asked have been consolidated for the purpose of providing response. Also, the meeting summary being prepared for this meeting will provide additional response to individual questions.*

Be sure to visit our project webpage at [www.bellevuewa.gov/meydenbauer\\_project\\_intro.htm](http://www.bellevuewa.gov/meydenbauer_project_intro.htm), where you can view our updated FAQ sheets and other information.

**1. Has the City considered razing the Bayvue Village Apartments and leaving the site in grass for a year or two?**

The City has committed to current tenants that the apartments will continue to be rented for the foreseeable future. The rental agreements allow for termination at any time (subject to appropriate notice), which provides flexibility in making future decisions about these buildings. A decision on the future of these buildings will likely not be made until the completion of the planning process.

**2. Why did the city buy the Bayvue Village Apartment?**

The City was fortunate to have the opportunity to acquire the Bayvue Village Apartments. Its location between Downtown Park and the Marina makes possible a key physical connection from the waterfront to Lake Washington Blvd/Main Street. It is likely that there will be a prominent pedestrian access through this site to the waterfront. What else occurs on the property alongside that access or to make that access interesting will be proposed through this planning process and finally determined by the City Council.

**3. What can be done with the Bayvue Village Apartment site?**

City ownership of this property will provide an opportunity to create a strong pedestrian connection between the waterfront park and the southwest corner of downtown. Just how that connection will look and how the property as a whole will be developed in order to support this connection will be determined through the planning process.

The purchase and sale agreement for the acquisition of this property contains no restrictions regarding future use, development, or ownership. So in that respect, the property is unconstrained. However, use and development of this property must comply with the Bellevue Land Use Code. The property lies within two land use districts: O (Office) and R-30 (Multifamily residential, 30 dwelling units per acre). City parks can locate in either district.

**4. Will an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for this project?**

The City must comply with the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) prior to taking certain actions, including approval of proposed Land Use Code or Comprehensive Plan changes and approval of construction permits. Environmental concerns will be identified, evaluated, and mitigated in full compliance with SEPA as part of that process, based on the alternatives that are forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration. Whether it is necessary to prepare an EIS or whether other methods prescribed by SEPA are most appropriate will be determined as the project progresses.

**5. Will impacts on the wider geographic community be evaluated?**

Yes. Just how “wide” a community is evaluated will depend on the impact. Different impacts have different geographic reach. For example, impacts related to noise, fisheries, earth, or water quality will affect different geographic areas and need to be evaluated according to their context. Earth-related impacts might not extend offsite and therefore might be addressed within a very limited geography. Impacts that extend offsite, such as those associated with traffic and noise, necessitate a broader evaluation.

**6. What will be done about water quality in the bay?**

Several “Planning Principles” were approved by the City Council for this project. One of those principles reads:

**Environmental stewardship.** The park design should respect and reflect its unique and sensitive waterfront setting. The plan should explore opportunities to incorporate measures that improve the shoreline characteristics and water quality in the bay. Best practices for sustainable building and land management should be incorporated.

We are aware that water quality issues exist in the bay, and this project will explore means to improve water quality.

**7. What is being proposed in the “upland”?**

The planning process is exploring what might be proposed. What we hope to accomplish through any proposal is the creation of visual and physical corridors or other

ways to connect the downtown and neighboring areas to the waterfront, and the establishment of urban design and land uses that are pedestrian-friendly and complement the park, so that an interactive experience between the waterfront and upland areas is achieved.

The question is what connections are desired and how do we help them happen? Can we do it by using existing public rights-of-way, or are some connections needed through private properties? If connections through private properties are needed, how can we entice owners of those properties to provide the corridors? Where is the balance between greater opportunities/economic return to a private landowner/developer and the desired increased public access to the waterfront?

In other words:

- (1) Can the vision of the adopted Comprehensive Plan as expressed in its goals and policies be accomplished solely through the use of existing publicly-owned property (rights-of-way and parcels of land that the City owns)?
- (2) If the vision of the Comprehensive Plan cannot be accomplished within the boundaries described above, what value can be added by trying to steer private development in a direction that provides public benefit?
- (3) If value needs to be added to private development in order to achieve the desired vision, where is the balance between what the larger community is willing to provide in terms of redevelopment incentives in order to gain what it wants in terms of increased waterfront access? The answer to this question is in large part subjective and requires assessment of “quality of life” issues.

In short, nothing is yet proposed. We seek your help in finding answers to these questions and deciding what should be explored further.

## **8. Are 11 story buildings proposed?**

Nothing is yet proposed. The “11 story” scenario came from an economic analysis tool that is still being refined. It establishes outer “bookends” to help understand the financial dynamics of private development scenarios. The 11 story “bookend” captures the full range of development opportunities that currently are available in the study area under the existing Land Use Code, which includes a portion of the Downtown land use district. The economic analysis does not represent any particular land use proposal, but is essentially a financial “measuring tape” that will:

- (a) Help us understand the economic return that land owners can realize under different scenarios; and
- (b) Test land use scenarios that may arise during this process to make sure that any land use incentives that might be offered to private developers achieve the desired results.

**9. Is a hotel proposed?**

Under the existing Land Use Code, hotels are currently allowed only in the portion of the study area that lies within the DNTN-OB land use district (generally, east of 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue along Main Street). The city is not aware of any private development plans to build a hotel on these properties, but such a proposal is possible under current regulations.

With respect to the current planning effort, nothing has yet been proposed. The economic analysis described above included hotel scenarios because:

- (1) Hotel use is permitted in the study area, within the DNTN-OB land use district;
- (2) A tool that limits itself to residential or “mixed use” is too restricted, given the range of uses that might offer the public benefits being sought or considered;
- (3) A hotel, sited and designed correctly, could be a logical and acceptable use somewhere in the primary study area; and
- (4) “Hotel” could be substituted by some other non-retail or non-residential use in order to measure financial feasibility.

**10. What role will developers play in implementing the plan?**

The purpose of evaluating land uses in the study area is to determine how to influence private development decisions in ways that benefit the public and support the park. Those benefits might be in the form of view corridors, pedestrian corridors, or land uses, urban forms, public spaces, or experiences that reinforce the connection and interaction of the upland area with the waterfront.

While the Land Use Code establishes a range of development opportunities in each land use district, developers ultimately make the choice of whether and how to invest in private property. To the extent that this process identifies desired public benefits involving private properties, it will ultimately be up to developers to choose an investment path that provides those benefits. The land use vision needs to be compelling enough to attract development that provides such benefits, in a way that does not produce undesirable consequences.

**11. What is happening at the gas station? Has it been sold?**

The King County Assessor’s website shows that the most recent sale of the property occurred in 2003, from Chevron USA Inc to Old Main Fueling LLC. Because of the moratorium, the City has not accepted any development plans for the property. The Downtown-Old Bellevue (DNTN-OB) land use district in which this property lies allows a wide range of potential uses.

**12. Why do “P’s” (indicating vehicle parking areas) show up in specific locations on some maps?**

The “P’s” on planning documents acknowledge an opportunity or need for parking. Parking could occur in a single or few locations or in several locations. How and where

parking is provided for the park is an important issue that needs to be evaluated, and part of the planning project is to explore opportunities for providing that parking.

**13. Why is a link from the waterfront park to Downtown Park necessary?**

Meydenbauer Bay plays a significant role in Bellevue's history. It has been the site of a ferry landing, served as a home to over-wintering whaling ships, hosted a dance pavilion, and more. Meydenbauer Bay now provides a range of recreational opportunities, including swimming, boating, walking, and other activities. It is a magnificent community asset, but is difficult to access or even view due to topography and existing development.

The portion of the Bay that is now open to the public is quite small and relatively inaccessible. Current and prior City Councils have long recognized the value in making Bellevue's Lake Washington waterfront available to all Bellevue residents. Over the course of many years the city has assembled properties along Meydenbauer Bay, resulting in a contiguous public ownership that can now be planned as a city park and waterfront destination.

In order for Bellevue residents to have the opportunity to enjoy the waterfront and appreciate its historical, recreational, and educational value, those residents must know that it exists and must be able to access it easily. Linking the park to the downtown by enhanced water views and easily navigated pedestrian routes, and reinforcing the waterfront presence through nearby land uses, urban design, way-finding, art/historical treatment, or other means will help reconnect the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods with Bellevue's historical roots. Such relationships will not only contribute to the success of the park, but will also contribute to the vibrancy of nearby neighborhoods.

**14. Will views be impacted?**

One of the project goals is to improve views to the water for the general public. We are currently refining computer-based models to help us understand both the opportunities and impacts of any new view corridors that might be provided as properties redevelop.

**15. Does the moratorium indicate where the City wants to buy property?**

The moratorium has no relation to property acquisition. The moratorium is solely a planning tool to maintain the status quo in the study area while this planning work proceeds, preventing redevelopment that could otherwise hamper the planning effort.

Although the Purchase and Sale Agreement for the Bayvue Village Apartments was agreed to while a moratorium was in effect, the acquisition had no relationship to the moratorium. The owner was willing to sell, and the City was able to buy. All previous property acquisitions for this project were accomplished without a moratorium in place.

**16. Why hasn't better public notice been provided?**

Significant notice has been provided and the City continues to broaden the outreach, tracking what methods work best to engage its citizens in the planning process. Postcards, posters, mailings, listserves to individuals and neighborhood associations, newspaper display ads, electronic and newspaper community calendar notices, continual

build of an “interested parties” mail lists, website announcements, announcements through utility billings, articles in “It’s Your City” publications, and more have been used and continue to be broadened.

The City recognizes that no single means of public notice is effective in reaching all parties concerned. Like you, the City wants to engage in a constructive dialogue about the opportunities and issues that accompany this project. Therefore, the City has and will continue to explore other means of involving the Bellevue community at large in determining the future of this area.

If you wish to be added to our “interested parties” list to ensure that you receive notice of future meetings and events, please contact one of the project managers:

Mike Bergstrom, Planning & Community Development (425) 452-6866,  
[mbergstrom@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:mbergstrom@bellevuewa.gov), or  
Robin Cole, Parks & Community Services, (425) 452-6195,  
[rcole@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:rcole@bellevuewa.gov).

#### **17. Why are non-residents on the steering committee?**

There are no residency requirements or other quantitative criteria for participation on steering committees. Each of the members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council has a long standing involvement and interest in the future of Bellevue. Collectively they represent a broad spectrum of experience and skills and a comprehensive cross-section of interests of the Bellevue community as a whole. These committee members serve without pay and are willing to donate their time and expertise for the betterment of the community at large.

The thirteen members of the Meydenbauer Bay Project steering committee bring the following characteristics and qualities:

- Long-time residents of Bellevue
- Residents of the Meydenbauer Bay and West Bellevue neighborhood
- Long-time activists in Bellevue initiatives
- Broad geographic representation of Bellevue residents
- Bellevue Planning Commission member
- Bellevue Transportation Commission member
- Bellevue Parks Board member
- Bellevue Human Services Commission members
- Bellevue Arts Commission member
- Architect
- Economic consultant
- Environmental consultant
- Energy consultant
- President of a neighborhood association in close proximity to the project area
- A founding mover behind Downtown Park
- Professionals with knowledge and experience in (i) affordable housing; (ii) mixed use development; (iii) character of Old Bellevue along Main Street
- Parents of young children who use parks
- Small business ownership

- Moorage tenant at the Bellevue Marina

The combination of these qualities brings a tremendous capability to collect, analyze, and distill information to put forth solid recommendations for a park and land use plan to implement the vision for a significant water front presence, at the same time being sensitive to the desires of and impacts upon neighboring Bellevue residents.

**18. Why doesn't the survey on the project website ask what we don't want?**

The survey asks what people want in order to develop a positive plan which responds to adopted plans and principles that Bellevue citizens have invested in over many years.

The survey is one of many means of input. The City has received input from a variety of other means, including records of steering committee meetings, comment forms, emails, and public events. This input reflects a variety of "wants" and "don't wants". All comments received are documented and provided to the Steering Committee.

**19. When will we get answers?**

Answers to some of your questions are provided above. Others will emerge from the planning process that is continuing. Your help is needed in providing answers to many of the questions that you and others have asked. We hope that you will stay involved in this discussion and this planning process and will invite your neighbors to join in the discussion as well.

*September 13, 2007*

*With September 19, 2007 corrections*